

## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A composition for stabilizing the nucleic acids of at least one cell in a specimen at ambient temperature, said composition being comprised of:

- (a) a first substance capable of precipitating or denaturing proteins, comprising at least one first alcohol or ketone and a second alcohol or ketone whose concentration is less than 80% of the total composition; and
- (b) dimethyl sulfoxide whose concentration is greater than 20% of the total composition,

wherein the concentrations of said first substances and dimethyl sulfoxide are effective to stabilize the nucleic acids of said at least one cell in a specimen at ambient temperature, and further wherein the combined concentration of said first substances and dimethyl sulfoxide is 100% of said composition.

2. (Currently Amended) The composition of Claim 1 wherein said ~~at least one~~ first or second alcohol or ketone is selected from the group consisting of methanol, ethanol, propanol, isopropanol, butanol and acetone.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Currently Amended) The composition of Claim ~~6~~ 1 wherein said concentrations of said first substances and dimethyl sulfoxide in said composition are in a ratio of 2.5:2.5:5 (first alcohol or ketone : second alcohol or ketone : dimethyl sulfoxide).

8. (Currently Amended) The composition of Claim 4 1 wherein said concentrations of said first substances and dimethyl sulfoxide in said composition are in a ratio of 1:1 (first substance : ~~second substance~~ dimethyl sulfoxide).

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Previously Amended) The composition of Claim 7 wherein said first alcohol or ketone is methanol, said second alcohol or ketone is ethanol.

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Previously Amended) The composition of Claim 8 wherein said first substance is methanol.

13. (Original) The composition of Claim 1 wherein said nucleic acid is DNA.

14. (Original) The composition of Claim 1 wherein said nucleic acid is RNA.

15. (Original) The composition of Claim 14 wherein said RNA is ribosomal RNA.

16. (Original) The composition of Claim 1 wherein said at least one cell is a prokaryote or eukaryote.

17. (Original) The composition of Claim 1 wherein said at least one cell is a microorganism.